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Wellbeing, being well or well becoming: who or what is it for and how might we get there?

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Abstract

This chapter explores the notion of wellbeing in relation to the pursuit of the good life. In doing so, it asserts that treating children as in a state of becoming is disempowering for children. In considering the good life, it is proposed that being well and living well are central and that this is facilitated through critical reflection and philosophical dialogue. The need for thinking that impacts on action is maintained and that ultimately the pursuit of the good life involves thinking of others as well as oneself.

Introduction

A book called *Wellbeing and Contemporary Schooling* would not have been likely until relatively recently. Indeed, it has only been in the last fifteen to twenty years that the notions of wellbeing and schooling have been in any way aligned. Education policy makers around the world seem to have determined that wellbeing should be a central part of learning and life in schools; see, for example, the Scottish, Australian, Canadian, Japanese and Finnish curricula. Traditionally schools focused on subject knowledge, what children might need to know or be able to do in order to function in the world of work. Take, for example, the teacher Gradgrind from Dickens' *Hard Times*; he wants his pupils to learn facts and only facts, with no allowance for imagination or creativity, and certainly no great interest in the children's welfare. While this character is somewhat exaggerated, it is based on common features of schooling in the nineteenth, and even into the twentieth century, in Britain and beyond. If the likes of imagination, creativity and thinking were not encouraged in the classroom, then there is little to suggest that children's wellbeing would be of interest. It makes sense to wonder why there has been this shift.

Certainly, the global, political context is an important one. In this age of instant access to world news and information, we are able to see and hear about the lives of our fellow humans, we are able to compare and contrast experiences, but this is not perhaps the main reason there has been a shift in thinking about what happens in schools. Biesta (2009) talks about the need to rethink the purpose of schooling. He situates his discussion in the educational context of outcomes and measurement agendas, suggesting that some thought needs to be given to what is valued in education. Note, too, that he is referring to the notion of education as opposed to schooling, with education perhaps being a broader notion than what happens in schools. Biesta cites the likes of the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Trends in International Maths and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) as tools that are used to measure elements of children's academic performance that result in the production of league tables where countries can compete against one another. The results of the studies are further dissected in order that individual countries can use these to 'drive up standards'. While Biesta

acknowledges that what happens in education should be based on facts, he cautions that we also need to consider what we want from our education systems and he asserts that values have a part to play in determining curricula and learning. This leads to questions, therefore, of what education is for.

Given that wellbeing features so strongly in school curricula, especially in the likes of the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence where wellbeing is the ‘responsibility of all’ and, like literacy and numeracy, is a central plank of what is done in schools, it seems that there has been a move in the purpose of schooling. While the language of measurement and outcomes is ever present in educational discourse, this is not restricted to academic subject areas like science, maths and literacy. Indicators of wellbeing have been produced, and measures are in place to gauge children’s wellbeing. In Scotland Scottish Government policy dictates that every child’s wellbeing should be considered against them being safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, and included

(<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/gettingitright/background/wellbeing>).

While the need to determine the purpose of education is important, the question of why wellbeing has become more prominent in school curricula remains. It is to this that the remainder of the chapter will turn.

In 1989 the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was published, and then subsequently ratified by world governments (with the exception to date of the USA). The treaty asserted fifty-four articles designed to protect and advance children’s social, political, civil, cultural and economic rights. Taken together, as the Convention states that the rights are not discrete, the wellbeing of children is at the very core. The need for this specific attention to children draws attention to why there is a contemporary interest in children’s wellbeing. Around the time of the UNCRC, a new academic discipline was emerging, that of Childhood Studies. Childhood Studies explores children’s lives, but it also raises questions of childhood and what it is to be a child. These are questions that were little discussed before the 1980s, and it is the emergence of notions of child/childhood, it could be argued, that has led to the view that children’s wellbeing is important and should be placed within contemporary schooling.

The chapter will consider the concept of child and why it needs to be considered in relation to wellbeing in schools. It will suggest that there is a disconnect between how children are seen in schools, and society more generally, and the notion of wellbeing. The role of the teacher in the promotion of wellbeing will be discussed before turning our attention to an approach, Community of Philosophical Inquiry, which might allow for teachers’ and learners’ wellbeing that will support them to live well together.

Main findings

Concepts of child

Childhood, as we currently think of it in Western societies, is a relatively new phenomenon (Cunningham, 2006). Children in mediaeval times, suggests Postman (1994), existed in the same social sphere as adults; they had access to the world of work, the world of

entertainment, of politics, religion, news and information. The divide between people was determined by class rather than age and it was with the invention of the printing press in the mid-fifteenth century that the difference between children and adults became more pronounced, mainly because people needed to be taught to read and the way in which this could be achieved was to send some individuals – children – to one place to learn, school. To be clear, not all children attended school and children did have their games and interests that were perhaps different to those of adults, but the suggestion is that in advancing the need to read, a distinction was made between two groups in society – children and adults. However, it was some considerable time after the invention of the printing press when the present notion of child and childhood was advanced.

Writing in 1762, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a Swiss philosopher, published two texts written to complement one another; one was *The Social Contract*, a treatise on the ideal state, and the other, a manifesto for educating children with the ideal state in mind, *Emile, or Education*. What is important in *Emile* is that Rousseau sets out five stages through which children progress in their development and within the early phases he advocates that children are breast-fed, that their limbs are freed from the swaddling they are wrapped in and that they are encouraged to learn through experience in the natural world, away from corrupting adult society. He proposes that the time of being a child, childhood, is one that should be prolonged, that it is a time of innocence and that it should be protected. This was arguably the first time in Western thinking that childhood was thought of in such terms and, as a consequence, current thought and practice has adopted this perspective. Jenks (1996) would describe this as the Apollonian view of children, that they are born good and that it is society that corrupts them. Cook (2009) suggests that the view of children and childhood illustrated by Jenks' Apollonian child is advanced and perpetuated because adults want to retain and protect their memories of their own childhood, a romanticised notion of happy and carefree times, an image with its roots in Rousseau's *Emile*. Others such as Rysst (2010, 2015) caution that we should be aware that as adults we view children/childhood through adult eyes and that we do so with the experiences we have had that children have not. As such, we run the risk of wrongly inferring things from our observations. In her 2010 study, Rysst spoke to ten year-old girls about why they wanted to buy the kinds of clothes that older sisters or pop stars wore as these could be seen as sexy. However, the children roundly refuted this accusation, saying that they simply wanted to look like the people they admire and those people are grown-up.

Stables (2008) offers us three more ways of thinking about child/childhood that are important to the present chapter. The first way to think about children, he says, is to accept that we are all children because we all have parents. The second is determined by one's age, for example, under Article 1 of the UNCRC a child is an individual under eighteen years of age, unless in their country they have attained the age of majority earlier, and this is usually determined by law. The third model is perhaps the most interesting and is linked to the Aristotelian notion of potential; the child is viewed in terms of its becoming. This notion is one that suggests childhood is a time when children are not yet ready to participate fully in the social world, that they have not learned what they need to learn and that their childhood is a time of

preparation. It is what Kohan (2011, p.342) refers to as ‘a revolutionary space of transformation’.

Child as becoming

Children are often not seen as complete beings, they are considered to be in a process of transition and they lack certain – necessary – qualities or attributes that adults possess (Kennedy, 2006; Cassidy, 2007, 2012). Adults, it seems, will rescue children from their childhood by preparing them well, by giving them the tools they will need in their future lives, by telling them what and how to think and behave. This deficit view of children is important in thinking about education broadly, and schooling more specifically. It situates children in positions where they have limited voice, power and influence and this is significant when speaking about children’s wellbeing.

The language of becoming is evident in much of the theory and practice around education. Curricula are written with a view to giving children the knowledge and skills they will need in the future, mainly in the world of work. Very little, it appears is done in schools that is not about training children for their roles in society when they have full access to it: their moral behaviour is regulated; they are taught how the world works through the likes of education for citizenship for when they will be able to make decisions; and their academic work is assessed, examined and measured in ways that determine their future paths. Take, for example, the Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland which states that the aim is for children to become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens (Scottish Executive, 2004). There is some rhetoric around preparing children for now and in their future lives, but the thrust of the documentation is forward-looking. There is, however, an interesting disconnect between the notion of becoming as evidenced by school systems, structures and practices, and that is in the area of wellbeing.

Wellbeing and becoming

There is much recent literature related to the notion of children’s wellbeing, and what it all has in common is that the authors all agree that there is no consensus in offering a definition of wellbeing (see, for example: Thomas, Graham, Powell & Fitzgerald, 2016; Amerijckx & Humblet, 2014; Marshford-Scott, Church & Taylor, 2012; Camfield, Streuli & Woodhead, 2009; Bourke & Geldins, 2007). In fact, what several authors have done is note that defining the concept is a difficult one, so they have asked children about their understanding of wellbeing. While there is not, and perhaps cannot, be one fixed definition, there is some commonality. There is agreement that wellbeing relates to one’s social, emotional, intellectual, mental and physical wellness, linking wellbeing to health. Features that emerge as important in considering one’s social, emotional, intellectual, mental and physical wellness are grounded in the likes of relationships, community, respect, agency, autonomy, happiness, satisfaction and being valued.

Thorburn, in chapter two, articulates different ways in which wellbeing might be considered. Drawing on Mill’s notion of maximising happiness is an attractive one when speaking about wellbeing, particularly when suggesting that one does this by advancing one’s own pleasure.

Children are often accused of pursuing what may be called an hedonistic approach to wellbeing, but this is to omit an element of pleasure for Mill that is important. Certainly Mill promotes the idea of pleasure, but he speaks of higher and lower pleasures, where the higher, more academic pleasures are ones that should be sought after in order to be happiest. More base pleasures such as eating chocolate or reading comics will be less likely to induce pleasure – wellbeing – than the more worthy activities advanced through the higher pleasures. Amerijckx and Humblet (2014) criticise such a hedonistic vision, favouring, instead, a more eudaimonic perspective. The eudaimonic life, for Aristotle, relates to ideas of flourishing, where one strives to live the good life, with this life being considered over the entirety of one's life rather than in the moment, as in the hedonistic view. It is no accident that the idea of child as becoming is Aristotelian in nature; the notion of potential for Aristotle was evident and, we may argue, leads one to suggest that wellbeing is something to strive for, that one may eventually attain. This is not helpful. Children exist in the present and, as Kennedy (1992) suggests, the adult is always travelling within the child, they are not two distinct entities. The being element of wellbeing is important.

Wellbeing or being well

While wellbeing is somewhat ill-defined, it may be more helpful to think in terms of being well, in other words, how one is in the world in terms of one's engagement and interaction with it and those who inhabit it. Being well need not refer to one's health, it goes beyond this to consider the individual as part of a larger whole. This is not to suggest that individuals are not important, but humans do not exist in isolation. Taking a broader view of ourselves in the social context allows us to consider why we are interested in children's wellbeing. It may be argued that much of what is done in schools when seeing the child as becoming or potential, is about socialisation, indoctrination or preparation, depending on one's philosophy of education. Ironically, though, under this view children are treated in an atomistic way; the idea that they are connected to others is limited to ensuring that the end product is as required or desired by adults and each child is monitored, assessed, in isolation. Children's physical fitness and mental health is explored on an individual level, their welfare is considered aside from the welfare of others, children are expected to reflect and evaluate as single entities who have learned how they are to be in society. Of course it is crucial that individual children's welfare is ensured, and there is no suggestion here that this should not be the case. However, the holistic view of the child only seems to pay attention to the child rather than the wider whole as humans situated amongst others.

This leads us to return to the question of who or what education or schooling is for. The view promoted by children being treated as becomings would suggest that education and schooling are not for those being educated or schooled, that the goal is to serve the structures already in place, where adults retain power and children aspire to attain that power. Amerijckx and Humblet (2014) suggest that a binary language is used when discussing children's wellbeing; they illustrate it through examples: positive versus negative wellbeing; objective versus subjective; end state versus process; material versus spiritual; individual versus community, but they do not recognise the more invidious binary of adult versus child. It is in the realm of adult that power resides. Adults measure children's successes, be that in their performance in

mathematics or their wellbeing. Despite children being able to articulate, even from a very young age, how well they feel, Mashford-Scott et al. (2012, p. 238) are correct to highlight that there is a 'belief that reports of subjective wellbeing are less credible or valid than objective measurements of wellbeing or observable behaviours [which] may contribute to a reluctance to seek children's perspectives on their wellbeing'. The emphasis on measuring children's wellbeing is skewed. The purpose of education and schooling, rather than situating wellbeing alongside health or as a discrete area within the curriculum, should be to support children to be well, to live the 'good life'.

The good life

The good life does not mean to lead a morally good life, though that may be part of it. Rather, it means to live well; this pertains to one's quality of life. There are elements in children's lives that are beyond their control, but the good life need not mean material wealth or possessions. No, let the material lives of children be the work of the state with overall responsibility for ensuring children's welfare. It is no accident that welfare would link to wellbeing, though it is perhaps a better construct in thinking about the elements that are often measured, such as how children are respected or cared for. The notion of the good life, or living/being well, affords children autonomy and power in their lives. The good life allows us to see ourselves as part of a larger picture. Bourke and Geldins (2007) suggest that it is problematic to separate the mental from the physical and social. This exposes one of the problems with wellbeing curricula in schools; discrete lessons or interventions to address specific issues or topics are introduced. In the same way that the individual does not exist outwith society, so too, the social cannot be separated from the mental; for example, in exploring with children the topic of feelings and emotions, it cannot make sense not to situate this conversation in the wider picture of how we engage with others and how they might engage with us.

Conrad, Cassidy and Mathis (2015), in discussing the notion of the good life, identify that there are at least two ways to think of the good life. The first is a subjective notion where the one determines what is good, pleasurable or enjoyable for oneself. This relates to one's personal preferences and interests. The second and more objective perspective is one that encourages individuals to strive for what will be as good a life as possible for all. The two are not mutually exclusive because the ideas of fairness or equality emerge quickly in any discussion considering the two perspectives. Conrad et al (2015) point to Krebs (1993) who suggests that the two coincide when we emphasise autonomy. The subjective view of the good life allows one some autonomy of realising a life that one considers good. The second perspective of autonomy is such that it guarantees everyone the opportunity to have the autonomous subjective good life they would choose. Nussbaum (2011) talks of capabilities, meaning what each individual is able to be and to do. Important to Nussbaum's notion of the good life is that one is able to conceive of the good and that one is also able to reflect critically in order to participate in the political world, the world of living with others. For Nussbaum, what is important in society, and those providing the structures for that society, is that support is provided to individuals in order that they might pursue and engage in an

autonomous, good life. This is not a view reserved for adults, but is a goal for all, regardless of age.

In striving for the good life, in learning to be well, the notion of child as becoming is lost. Being is in the present, and being well is the good life, the good life is for all and is not something one has to wait for until one reaches adulthood. It would be foolish to suggest that children are able to control all aspects of their lives, but the question of how they think about how to live their lives offers them some autonomy which will, in turn, facilitate their engagement in decision-making about their welfare, general wellbeing and health. In supporting children to be well, children will be better able to access their rights, particularly in relation to being able to express their views in matters concerning them, as set out under Article 12 of the UNCRC. Ultimately this will impact on every aspect of their lives while allowing that they need not be in a period of preparation; in being well, children exist in the now.

Ryan (2012) suggests that living well is aligned to applying one's knowledge, that one uses this 'wisdom' to engage with ethical and practical challenges and decisions about how one should live one's life. She proposes that living well is necessary in order to be wise. School certainly offers children opportunities to gather information, but to be wise one must be able to apply that information, or knowledge. Aristotle talks of *phronesis*, or practical wisdom that 'implies a broad evaluative ability. It tells us what and what not to do' (Juuso, 1999, p.21). For Juuso (1999), if we are to be wise and live a good life, critical discussion and judgement are vital. Cassidy (2012) asserts that the idea of practical wisdom requires action if it is to have any impact on how one lives the good life. She situates the place for learning how to engage in critical discussion in schools. This is simply a practical measure since the majority of children attend school, making this learning easier. The learning can then be taken beyond the confines of the school and into wider society, since being well, the good life, is not reserved for educational institutions. The manner in which such critical discussion might be practised might be through an approach such as Philosophy with Children.

Philosophy with Children

Given that 'It is the task of philosophy to understand the general nature of human beings and society' (Jusso, 1999, p.13), a philosophical approach to discussion would seem appropriate. There are many approaches to Philosophy with Children (PwC), but they all have their roots in Lipman's Philosophy for Children (P4C) programme (Lipman, 2003; Pardales & Girod, 2006; McCall, 2009; Vansieleghem & Kennedy, 2011). Unlike academic philosophy that is studied in universities or for exams in secondary schools, PwC is practical philosophy.

During PwC sessions children engage in dialogue using a structure that encourages them to make connections between others' contributions by agreeing and disagreeing and offering reasons for those agreements and disagreements. The dialogue is philosophical in nature with children discussing issues related to the likes of justice, fairness, art, the environment, time, language, or even what makes a good life (see Conrad et al, 2015). The dialogue is facilitated, usually by an adult with some training in PwC and in academic philosophy.

Gregory (2008, p.7) notes what children will gain from participating on PwC; they will, he says

become aware of the aesthetic or the ethical in their own experience, to share their puzzlement and excitement, to inquire into the problematic and to learn how to make their own sense of it all – to formulate their own judgements about what is what and how things relate, and how their corner of the world could be more just, more beautiful, more meaningful.

In effect, what Gregory has shown us what it means to live or be well. What Gregory is proposing is more than the information or knowledge that is gleaned through attending school, he offers a suggestion of what could be achieved if children are given the tools to think for themselves. Such an approach will support children to engage with the world in a way that will work for its benefit.

Living well demands that one lives well with others. Earlier in the chapter there was the suggestion that wellbeing related to ideas of community, relationships, respect, agency, autonomy, happiness, satisfaction, and being valued. Practising PwC addresses each of these elements. The notion of community is essential in PwC; grounded in Dewey's philosophy, the idea of shared meaning making is central. Working collaboratively, though not necessarily in agreement, the participants work to come to some shared understanding of the topic under examination. This does not mean that the participants reach a consensus, since philosophical dialogue would cease were everyone to agree. This is also important, in practising PwC, children come to learn that people need not agree, that they can live well together while disagreeing and that they are furnished with resilience in accepting that others may disagree with them. Indeed, they will accept that disagreement can be important in exploring what it means to live well, particularly in advancing the good life for themselves and others. This resonates with the need for respect if one's wellbeing is considered to be good. In PwC every participant has an equal voice. In addition, the space to speak – or not – is afforded to everyone and then they speak they will be listened to and their contribution will be taken seriously. While not every contribution will be followed-up by other participants, the contribution is valued because it has come as a consequence of building upon the previous contributions. This sense of having something listened to and that contributes to a wider purpose, the shared purpose of the community of philosophical inquiry, allows participants to feel valued.

The sense of being valued is important for all, but even more especially perhaps, for those who are more likely to be marginalised. One approach to PwC, Community of Philosophical Inquiry (CoPI) (Cassidy, 2007; McCall, 2009), has been shown to be particularly inclusive for children who are marginalised because of their particular emotional and behavioural needs, including children with autism (Cassidy, Christie, Marwick, Deeney, McLean & Rogers, under review). The children are able to participate in ways that are different to their usual patterns in class and they have transferred some of the skills acquired during CoPI to other group work activity. Similarly, Cassidy, Heron and Christie (2015) have been conducting CoPI sessions in secure residential accommodation for children aged between

fourteen and seventeen. The participants have reported that they feel listened to, respected and part of a club, or community, when participating in the sessions. They reported that they felt valued that there was interest enough in what they had to say that someone from outwith the institution had volunteered to come to work with them and to introduce them to practical philosophy.

This sense of having someone listen to them is suggestive that children generally do not consider themselves to be listened to. This is borne out in the perpetuation of the notion of child as becoming, where they are not yet considered able to participate fully in the society in which they live. Being listened to and realising that it may have an effect or bearing on decisions made about or for children ought to promote a sense of agency. If children's views are taken seriously and action results as a consequence, this can only be an empowering experience that will lead to agency, engagement and an autonomous outlook. Of course children must depend on adults for the provision of certain aspects of their wellbeing such as shelter, food, health, clothing, and some areas of their education, but more autonomous children can assert what they consider their needs to be and be more able to assess whether those needs have been met. Acknowledging that one has more autonomy means that one is empowered and, it might be suggested, more satisfied or happy as a consequence.

Like other areas of wellbeing, happiness is not something that is easily measured or quantified, though one ought to be able to say if one is happy or not. Mashford-Scott et al (2012, p. 237) are correct to assert that there ought to be a focus on children's 'own sense of wellbeing [rather than] the demonstrations of particular behaviours'. It may be that participating in philosophical dialogue makes people happy, there are many that attest that it does, but the place of PwC in relation to one's satisfaction or happiness is that one is able to interrogate what it means to be happy or satisfied and gauge to what extent one considers oneself to be so. Further, in engaging in such dialogue, participants are able to explore just what it means to live well or have the good life.

Conrad et al (2015) did just that, holding CoPI sessions with over 130 children between the ages of three and eighteen in Scotland and Switzerland to reach some sense of what the children think the good life is. Across the age groups and between the two countries there were elements in common: family; friends; fun; equality; fairness; justice; and kindness. What emerged in the dialogues, though, was that children saw themselves as distinct from the rest of society and that they did not consider themselves to have influence or autonomy. In other words, the children had already been pulled into accepting the suggestion that children are 'other' to adults and that they are in a period of preparation, of becoming. The strong sense that the good life demanded that people are treated fairly and equitably is important since this illustrates that the children do not see individuals in isolation but that their sense of the good life is one that turns on relationships with and to others. Given that relationships are seen to be important to children's wellbeing, this is significant. The children recognise the need for positive relationships with others if one is to have a good life. In addition, through participating in PwC children learn how to engage with others and build relationships. This is closely linked to the idea of community. Community of Philosophical Inquiry demands that participants work together, though they may disagree or even dislike one another. The

dynamics and relationships created in the likes of CoPI are important, where children learn that they are important members of the community, that they have relationships with the other participants and that the whole is often greater than the parts.

It is in engaging in philosophical dialogue that children 'move beyond the instrumental nature of using philosophy in the classroom to enhance academic performance and allow that it becomes an enriching part of one's life' (Cassidy, 2012, p. 261). A rich life must be one in which one is living, being well. It is perhaps through philosophical dialogue, through PwC, where children come together to explore ideas, to examine life and all that it holds, where children engage in what Gregory (2011, p.212) calls a 'method of wisdom training' that children may come to see what a good life is and what it means to live well. It is from here, it is hoped, that children move from thought to action if they are to have a good life, if they are to be well.

And what about the teachers?

In an age of measurement and accountability it is not only the children's wellbeing or good life that is called into question. At a time when teachers are under increasing pressure to perform better, meaning to ensure better grades and outcomes from the children with whom they are working, the lives of teachers cannot be dissociated from their work. Acton and Glasgow (2015, p. 110) are clear that there are great 'difficulties in maintaining [teachers'] wellbeing in political times that foreground performativity and competition'. They conclude that it is important to avoid simply 'managing stress, burnout or resilience' (p. 111), that what is required is a positive working environment where happiness is promoted. Teachers, though they need to collaborate, do not always find themselves in a collegiate atmosphere where they are valued and where happiness is not a priority. In such an atmosphere relationships with colleagues and children may not be as rich as they might otherwise be were there to be a focus on being well.

Petegem, Creemers, Rossel and Aelterman (2005) note that teachers have often over-estimated the positive relationships they have with the children with whom they work. They emphasise that in order for teachers and children to feel good, a positive classroom environment is needed that situates positive relationships at the centre. Engaging with children that positions them as autonomous and empowered within the classroom, where they are seen as beings rather than as becomings might serve to support a positive classroom environment. In addition, in situating the promotion of the good life or being well at the centre for all in the classroom, healthy relationships may be engendered. Indeed, this should not be limited to the classroom, but should be practised across the school context. To include the suggestion that practical philosophy is introduced to classrooms would also support the notion of a respectful, happy space that fosters a sense of community where all work to a shared goal of promoting the good life of themselves and others. Indeed, it would be no bad thing to promote practical philosophy with and for teachers and other members of the school community.

So, who or what is it for? And how might we get there?

At the outset of the chapter there was some discussion about the nature of wellbeing and who this was for. While wellbeing may be difficult to define, there is some consensus around elements that constitute wellbeing. Instead, though, what might be more helpful is to reflect on how children are perceived. In empowering children that they may be more engaged with the world it is important to see them as beings rather than as becomings. In considering their wellbeing, it is more helpful, perhaps, to think about being or living well and that this resides in the notion of the good life. So, who is the good life for? The good life is for everyone. One cannot be well or be well, live well or have a good life in isolation. One way we might promote critical discussion that leads to thoughtful action and the good life that treats children as beings and ensures valued and valuable relationships in our schools might be through an approach such as Community of Philosophical Inquiry. In promoting the good life we support children – and their teachers – to recognise they are part of a wider whole and that, as Nussbaum (2011) suggests, one element of the good life is that we would wish to promote conditions that allow for others also to have a good life, to have well being.

Future directions

The chapter highlighted that children are often considered as in a state of becoming rather than as beings in and of themselves. It went on to suggest that in order to consider children's being well or living well was a helpful way of considering the notion of wellbeing. The notion of the good life was seen to be the purpose of being well or living well and that this was not an individual endeavour. The chapter concluded by proposing that in order to effect a good life, one is able to engage critically with the world and others and that this may be achieved in part through Philosophy with Children. In moving research forward, there are at least two areas worthy of further exploration. The first would be to explore the ways in which a programme of PwC might support more positive teacher-children relationships and other features of what are understood as contributing to wellbeing. The second area would be to explore the extent to which engaging in philosophical dialogue impacts on teachers' and children's actions.

Summary of key findings

- Children are usually treated as in a state of becoming where childhood is a preparation for adult life and full membership of society.
- Notions of being well or living well may be helpful in trying to understand wellbeing.
- Critical discussion and reflection help towards the good life.
- One does need lead the good life in isolation.
- Philosophy with Children may be one way to promote the good life.

Reflective tasks

- To what extent is it problematic to think of children as becomings?

- What might the differences be between welfare, wellbeing and being well?
- What features might a classroom that embraces a philosophical outlook have?
- How might one know if one has a good life?

Further reading

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